

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 30, 2023

Eric G. Olshan
U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania
U.S. Department of Justice
700 Grant Street, Suite 4000
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

Dear Mr. Olshan,

I write to you about the recent incident at Greater Dominion Church in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, that raises concerns in our community about a potential hate crime in violation of federal law.

Reports indicate that a man attempted to enter Greater Dominion Church, a predominantly Black church, with a firearm on the morning of Sunday, August 27, 2023. Police arrested the armed man after he pointed the firearm at two women. Reports say that law enforcement, after conducting a search of the man's home, concluded that he was prepared for a standoff with police.¹

With hate crimes on the rise across the country, including against Black Americans, it is understandable that any community would be concerned by an armed individual terrorizing a place of worship. A community not too far away from the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the Greater Dominion congregation knows too well the harm that an armed individual filled with hate can do.

Federal law prohibits willful injury to, intimidation of, or interference with an individual because of that person's race, color, religion, or national origin, and because of that person's participation in certain enumerated protected activities (18 U.S.C. § 245). Federal law also prohibits the intentional obstruction of any person's enjoyment of the free exercise of religious beliefs by actual or threatened force (18 U.S.C. § 247(a)(2)).

I write to respectfully request that the Department of Justice investigate whether this crime violated any civil rights laws and, if appropriate, prosecute the individual to the fullest extent should it determine any federal crimes were committed against the Greater Dominion congregation. I stand ready to assist your office in any way that I can and appreciate your attention to this serious matter.

Very respectfully,



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress

CC: Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.wtae.com/article/ambridge-greater-dominion-church-armed-man/44929341#>.